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Emergency Preparedness
Blizzards & Road Travel

Blizzards are the most threatening of winter storms in Alberta. A typical Alberta blizzard will last longer than six hours, combine falling, blowing and drifting snow with wind speeds over 40 km per hour (25 miles), reduce visibility, produce low temperatures and a snowfall of more than 10 centimetres (4 inches) in a 12 hour period.

A powerful blizzard will often force highway and school closures, cause power and gas outages, leave motorists stranded or at worst, disable communities. Your local government and schools are prepared and ready to put emergency plans into action when a blizzard occurs... are you?

You can take simple safety precautions before and during a blizzard to help you and members of your family survive.

Vehicle Emergency Kit

Vehicles should be equipped with supplies which could be useful in an emergency.

- Blanket
- Booster cables
- Extra clothing and footwear
- Fire extinguisher (rated A-B-C)
- First aid kit with first aid manual
- Flashlight and batteries
- Gas line antifreeze
- Maps
- Matches and a "survival" candle in a tin can (to warm hands, heat a drink or use as an emergency light)
- Non-perishable high energy foods (raisins, granola bars, etc).
- Sand
- Shovel
- Solar, wind-up or battery radio
- Tool kit
- Water (bottled)
- Warning light or reflectors

Before You Travel

- Be informed and keep up-to-date on changing weather and road conditions.
- Ensure that you and your family members have proper winter clothing and are appropriately dressed when driving or heading outdoors in severe winter temperatures.
- Travel with a half to full tank of gas -- you never know when you'll be stranded or caught in a major traffic delay.
- Ensure your vehicle has good snow tires and have a qualified mechanic check your vehicle to ensure it is in good working condition for winter driving.
- If you are planning a long road trip or driving in a low traffic area, you may want to add these items to your vehicle kit:
  - Sand.
  - Facial Tissue.
  - Sleeping bag for each passenger.
  - Pocket knife.
  - Extra food and water supplies.
  - Can-opener.
  - Change of clothing along with extra socks, hats, mittens, boots and coats.
  - Catalytic heater or propane lantern for heat and light.

During the Blizzard

If roads are in poor condition and travel is not recommended, stay where you are until the situation changes. If you must travel, take a cellular phone with you or advise someone what route you are taking and your expected arrival time. Always drive with extreme caution! If you find yourself caught in a blizzard or stranded in your vehicle take the following safety precautions:

- Stay with the vehicle.
- Wait for help. In a blizzard, rescue workers will be looking for stranded vehicles.
- If you attempt to walk and find help in blowing snow, low temperature storm - disorientation can occur quickly and you can become lost.
- Keep warm and dry.
- Stay relaxed and think through possible actions.
- Slightly open a window on the sheltered side, away from the wind, for ventilation.
- Leave the car hood up to signal distress.
- Turn on your emergency flashers to attract the attention of passing motorists or the police.
- Keep your emergency kit handy in the vehicle.
- If your vehicle is stuck, think carefully before attempting to push the vehicle manually or shovel during strong biting winds, blinding snow and cold temperatures.
- Work or walk slowly. Over exertion and exposure to the weather may lead to a heart attack unless you are in prime physical condition.
- Always think in terms of preserving body heat. Perspiration can mean a dangerous loss of body heat. Your clothing is the closest insulation to your body and it must be kept dry. When you perspire, your clothing will become damp and lose its insulation value.
- If your vehicle's exhaust pipe is buried in snow, try to clear the snow away or exhaust fumes will travel into the vehicle when it's running.
- If you can't run your vehicle, light a candle to keep warm.
- Run your motor sparingly and only if the exhaust pipe is exposed and exhaust can be taken away by air currents.
- Avoid overheating - loosen clothing at the neck, wrist and in front or remove layers of clothing.
- Use the high energy foods packed in your emergency kit. Your body requires fuel to keep warm.
- Stimulate circulation by moving your arms, hands and feet.
- After the blizzard or bad weather has past, seek help during daylight hours.

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Alberta
MUNICIPAL AFFAIRS